



Office for Victims of Crime

July 1999

# OVC Fact Sheet

*Advocating for the Fair*

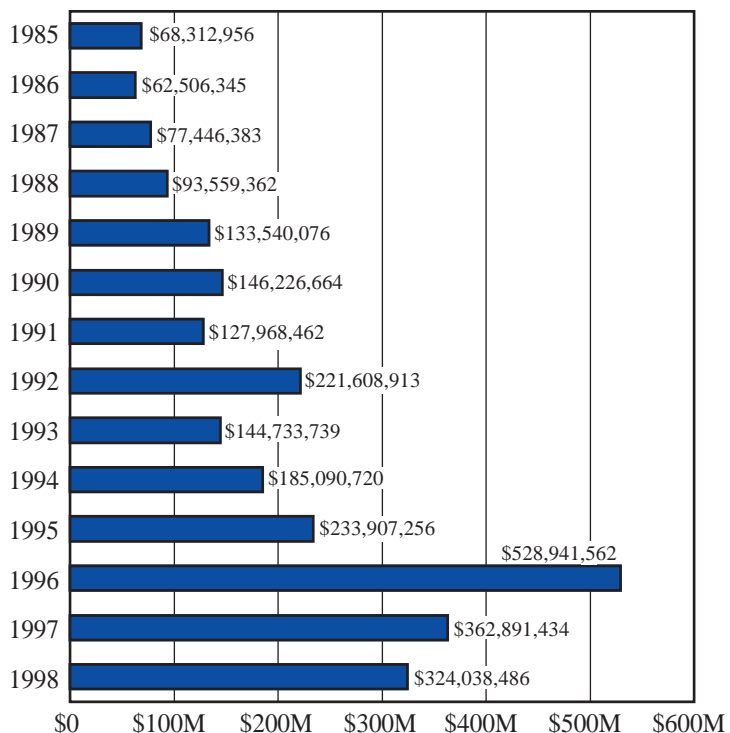
*Treatment of Crime Victims*

## Victims of Crime Act Crime Victims Fund

The Crime Victims Fund was established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) and serves as a major funding source for victim services throughout the country. Each year, millions of dollars are deposited into this Fund from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalty fees, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorney's Offices, U.S. Courts, and the Bureau of Prisons. These dollars come from offenders convicted of Federal crimes not from taxpayers.

Deposits into the Fund fluctuate from year to year. The chart below depicts deposits into the Fund from 1985 through 1998.

**Crime Victims Fund Deposits**



When the Crime Victims Fund was authorized in 1984, a cap was placed on Fund deposits for the first eight years. However, the cap on deposits was lifted in 1993 thus allowing all criminal fines, bail forfeitures, penalties and special assessments authorized by VOCA for the Crime Victims Fund to be deposited into the Fund to support crime victim program activities.

### How Are Fund Deposits Disbursed?

The first \$10 million is used to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. The \$10 million is divided between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (\$8.5 million) and OVC (\$1.5 million). The portion administered by OVC is used exclusively to help Native Americans improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases, particularly child sexual abuse.

The remaining Fund deposits are distributed in the following ways:

- 48.5 percent to State compensation programs.
- 48.5 percent to State assistance programs.
- 3 percent for discretionary funds to support demonstration projects, training, and other assistance to expand and improve the delivery of services to federal crime victims.

### Victim Compensation

#### What Is Crime Victim Compensation?

Crime victim compensation is a direct reimbursement to, or on behalf of, a crime victim for the following crime-related expenses:

- Medical costs.
- Mental health counseling.
- Funeral and burial costs.
- Lost wages or loss of support.

Other compensable expenses may include eyeglasses or other corrective lenses, dental services and devices, prosthetic devices, and crime scene clean-up.

## **What Is a Crime Victim Compensation Program?**

Every State administers a crime victim compensation program. These programs provide financial assistance to victims of both Federal and State crimes. Although each State compensation program is administered independently, most programs have similar eligibility requirements and offer a comparable range of benefits. Maximum awards generally range from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

The typical State compensation program requires victims to report crimes to law enforcement within 3 days and to file claims within a fixed period of time, usually 2 years. Most States can extend these time limits for good cause. If other financial resources are available, such as private insurance, compensation is paid only to the extent that the collateral resource does not cover the loss.

## **Which States Receive VOCA Compensation Grants?**

All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands receive VOCA compensation grants.

A State is eligible to receive a VOCA compensation grant if it meets the criteria set forth in VOCA and OVC's Program Guidelines. Examples of such criteria include providing services for Federal crime victims and assisting victims who are victimized within the State when the victim resides in another State. Under the 1996 Antiterrorism Act, States must also provide compensation to residents who are victims of terrorist acts within or outside the United States.

The formula for VOCA compensation grants to States is based on a percentage of State payments to crime victims in a previous year.

## **Victim Assistance**

### **What Is Victim Assistance?**

Victim assistance includes, but is not limited to, the following services:

- Crisis intervention.
- Counseling.
- Emergency shelter.
- Criminal justice advocacy.
- Emergency transportation.

Throughout the nation, there are approximately 10,000 organizations that provide these and other services to crime victims. Nearly 3,300 of those organizations receive some VOCA funds.

## **Which States Receive VOCA Victim Assistance Grants?**

All States and most Territories receive an annual VOCA victim assistance grant. Each State, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico receive a base amount of \$500,000. The territories of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa each receive a base amount of \$200,000. Additional funds are distributed based on population.

States competitively award VOCA funds to local community-based organizations that provide services directly to victims of crime.

## **How Do States Determine Which Organizations Will Receive VOCA Victim Assistance Grants?**

Each State has discretion to determine which organizations will receive funding based upon the VOCA victim assistance guidelines and the needs of crime victims within the State. Most States make awards on a competitive basis.

VOCA assistance funds may be used only for direct services to crime victims. Services such as offender rehabilitation, criminal justice improvements, and crime prevention activities cannot be supported with VOCA assistance funds.

## **Discretionary Funds**

### **What Are Discretionary Funds?**

VOCA authorizes OVC to use discretionary funds to improve and enhance the quality and availability of victim services. Each year, OVC develops a Program Plan which identifies the training and technical assistance and demonstration initiatives to be funded on a competitive basis in the coming year.

**How Are the Discretionary Funds Used?**

At least half of all discretionary grant funds are dedicated to improving the response to Federal crime victims. Initiatives include the following:

- Training Federal criminal justice system personnel on victims’ issues.
- Developing materials that help Federal victims understand their rights and available services.
- Supporting programs that establish and expand existing services for Federal crime victims.

The remaining discretionary funds support a variety of nationwide initiatives such as follows:

- Developing training curricula.
- Training victim services and criminal justice professionals.

- Working to raise the awareness of victim’s rights and needs throughout the country.
- Identifying and disseminating promising practices in victim services.
- Supporting and evaluating demonstration programs.

**For Further Information**

More information about the Office for Victims of Crime is available through the following sources:

OVC .....	202-307-5983
OVC Web Site .....	<a href="http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/">http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/</a>
OVC Resource Center .....	800-627-6872
OVC Resource Center Web Site .....	<a href="http://www.ncjrs.org">http://www.ncjrs.org</a>

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# **Visit the OVC Web Site**

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>

**for the latest information on  
Victims Issues.**

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**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Office of Justice Programs  
*Office for Victims of Crime*

*Washington, D.C. 20531*

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